DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 443 254 EC 307 950

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Todis, Bonnie; Sohlberg, McKay Moore; Glang, Ann |
| TITLE | Making the IEP Process Work for Students with Brain Injuries. |
| INSTITUTION | Western Oregon State Coll., Monmouth. Teaching Research Div.; Oregon Research Inst., Eugene. |
| SPONS AGENCY | Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC. |
| PUB DATE | 1999-00-00 |
| NOTE | 68p. |
| CONTRACT | H086D10008; H086D50012 |
| AVAILABLE FROM | L&A Publishing/Training, 708 Young Forest Dr., Wake Forest, NC 27587; Tel: 919-562-0015; e-mail: lapublishing@earthlink.net; Web site: http://www.lapublishing.com. |
| PUB TYPE | Books (010) -- Guides - Non-Classroom (055) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC03 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Data Collection; *Educational Planning; *Head Injuries; *Individualized Education Programs; Meetings; *Neurological Impairments; Parent Teacher Conferences; Secondary Education; *Student Participation; Teamwork |

ABSTRACT

This manual is designed to be used for any kind of student-centered planning for secondary students with brain injuries, including the Individualized Education Program (IEP) required for every student who is found eligible for special education. The manual provides questionnaires, observation forms, and procedures to help the education team gather information and prepare the student to be an active participant. Strategies are given for conducting focused, efficient, and effective meetings that identify student goals, prioritize student needs, and involve the educational team in an action plan. The complex needs of students with brain injuries are the focus of this manual, but the process can be used for problem solving and program planning for any student with disabilities. The first part of the manual describes steps for gathering information, including: (1) distribute information forms to teachers; (2) send parent information form home; (3) collect forms; (4) interview student; (5) get information if needed; (6) observe if possible; and (7) put it all together. The second part of the manual provides steps for running IEP meetings and developing an action plan. Relevant forms and handouts are also provided. (CR)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 443 254

# Making the IEP Process Work

## For students with brain injuries

Written by
Ann Glang, Ph.D.
McKay Moore Sohlberg, Ph.D.
& Bonnie Todis, Ph.D.

*L&A Publishing/Training*

EC 307950

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

# Making the IEP Process Work

## For students with brain injuries

This manual was developed as part of Grants #H086D10008 and #H086D50012 from the U.S. Department of Education. The authors would like to thank Tuck Stevens for her assistance with field testing and preparation of this manual.

Written by
**Bonnie Todis, Ph.D.**
**McKay Moore Sohlberg, Ph.D.**
**Ann Glang, Ph.D.**

*L&A Publishing/Training*

# Table of Contents

About the Authors....1
Introduction....2
Gathering information....7
Step 1 Distribute information forms to teachers....8
Step 2 Send parent information form home....13
Step 3 Collect forms....21
Step 4 Interview student....21
Optional Step 5 Get information if needed....29
Optional Step 6 Observe if possible....30
Step 7 Putting it all together....33
Running the meeting....41
Summary....54
Forms and handouts....55
Resources....63

# About the Authors

**Bonnie Todis, Ph.D.,** is an associate research professor at Teaching Research, a division of Western Oregon University, and University of Oregon. She has worked as a special education teacher for middle and high school students in both urban and rural districts. Her work since 1990 has focused on forming partnerships with parents, teachers and students to gain an understanding of how to overcome barriers to delivery of effective educational interventions.

**McKay Moore Sohlberg, Ph.D.,** is a professor in the Communication Disorders Program at the University of Oregon. She conducts clinical research aimed at developing and evaluating methods to help adolescents and adults manage cognitive changes after brain injuries.

Together with Drs. Glang and Todis, she worked on this project to learn how schools could help their students with brain injuries be more successful. She is grateful for the insights of the many students and staff in secondary schools throughout Oregon who contributed to the development of these materials.

**Ann Glang, Ph.D.,** is an associate research professor at Teaching Research, a division of Western Oregon University, and a research scientist at Oregon Center for Applied Sciences, Inc. (ORCAS). In her work as a teacher, consultant, and researcher, she has focused on developing effective support services for children with brain injuries, their families, and the schools who serve them.

# Introduction

Students with brain injuries encounter an array of challenges when they return to school. These may include mobility, visual, auditory, speech, and language impairments, as well as cognitive and behavioral changes. Meeting the complex needs of these students is an ongoing challenge for special educators and regular classroom teachers.

To be successful in middle, junior high and high school, students must learn to independently manage complex schedules, deadlines, materials, and other academic and social responsibilities. Brain injuries change the way students process, store and respond to information. Students often need help with the organizational skills that are so critical in these settings. For example, they benefit from compensatory memory and learning aids such as written schedules, homework lists, checklists for class materials, diaries of daily events, etc.

As students mature, they are confronted with important choices and decisions about their futures. Going to college, learning a trade, finding a job, getting an apartment, becoming independent – these choices become more complicated for the adolescent who has a brain injury. The transition from special education services to the adult service system often seems like "falling off a cliff". Careful planning and preparation is needed during high school years to bridge these systems. The pressure of decreasing time is a concern of many parents of students with special needs who are aware of the limited window of opportunity for services under special education.

## Why use this manual?

This manual can be used for any kind of student-centered planning, including the individualized education plan (IEP) required for every student who is found eligible for special education. The tools and techniques described can help the educator gather information and conduct effective meetings. These methods can help educators and parents identify a student's strengths and spot difficulties as well as generate options and monitor progress. When these tools and techniques are used in combination with the goals and objectives of the IEP, educators, families and students become successful collaborators in the educational process.

Why is this necessary if the IEP process already works for students with special needs? This manual builds on the tools and skills that most educators and school staff already possess from their experience with students who have special needs. However, since the consequences of a brain injury can be so complex and unpredictable, educators are often uncertain where to begin.

The methods described in this manual are not for exclusive use with students with brain injuries. They can be implemented with any student with a disability. However, these tools were initially developed for middle through high school students with brain injuries because:

- their needs change rapidly, especially during the first 1-2 years after the injury;
- parents of students injured during adolescence are introduced to the special education system for the first time;
- latent effects of a brain injury may show up over time;
- brain development is still ongoing through adolescence;
- school work becomes more complex.

Students who have brain injuries prior to adolescence typically encounter new difficulties as they enter middle school or high school, even if elementary school went smoothly. Too often, changes are blamed on low motivation, poor attitudes or adolescent behavior when, in fact, the long-term consequences of an earlier brain injury are becoming evident as school work becomes more complex and different functions of the brain are challenged.

Students who are injured during adolescence struggle with many changes. Some are related to their injuries; others are part of adolescence. Parents may feel confused and challenged as they try to learn about and negotiate the unfamiliar system of special education. They no longer have the luxury of time to try a range of vocational and academic options.

Educators and staff, even those with experience in educating students with special needs, are concerned about how to help students with brain injuries. Schools typically have little experience teaching these students. Consequently, many staff question whether they are "doing the right thing" and admit they "don't really understand how the brain injury has affected this student".

This manual was developed to respond to educator comments such as...

*"I'm not sure what I should be looking for."*

*"It's really confusing because he does so well in some areas."*

*"Sometimes I think that her frustration is really my fault."*

*"She was always a difficult student, so why focus on the injury?"*

These comments reflect educators' desire to help students with brain injuries, but also their uncertainty about how to teach them.

Techniques described in this manual help educators....

- gather information about how the student functions in different school settings and at home
- organize and conduct educational planning meetings
- check progress on action plans
- reconvene the educational team as needed
- communicate about selection, implementation, and monitoring of strategies.

## Principles of Manual

This manual provides questionnaires, observation forms, and procedures to help the educational team gather information and prepare the student to be an active participant. Strategies are given for conducting focused, efficient and effective meetings that identify student goals, prioritize student needs, and involve the educational team in an action plan. The complex needs of students with brain injuries are the focus of this manual, but the process can be used for problem solving and program planning for any student with disabilities.

This manual is based on the following principles of educational planning:

### Student-centered

The student is the key player in each stage of developing an educational plan. This ensures that the plan that is implemented is one that is being done *with* the student, not *to* or *for* the student. Self-advocacy and independence are key goals for students who are, or will soon be, preparing for transition from high school to life and work in the community.

### Goal-based

The student's goals determine the priorities of the individual education plan (IEP) and can motivate the student to stay engaged academically.

### Team-supported

Anyone who wants to support the student can be included in the IEP process to share perspectives and information from different settings and disciplines.

**Positive**

Some adolescents with brain injuries have had negative school experiences because of academic failure, behavior problems, or poor social relationships. While recognizing that changes after brain injury are to be expected, this manual focuses on the student's abilities and goals. Difficulties and problems are recast as challenges or barriers to be overcome. A problem-solving approach helps the student until needs are met.

**Flexible**

The challenges students with brain injuries present are different from those of other students with disabilities. Each student is unique. Rigid adherence to policies and programs will create unnecessary obstacles, while a willingness to think "out of the box" speeds up problem solving.

**Ongoing**

There is no quick fix. Educational planning for a student with a brain injury is a process that requires ongoing assessment, problem-solving, intervention, and monitoring of successes and difficulties throughout the secondary school years.

**Comprehensive**

Student-centered planning addresses the student's needs across the entire school program.

This process is *proactive.* By devoting time prior to implementing strategies, educational teams can avoid problems that may arise because of poor planning or communication. Many teachers have reported that using these techniques actually saved them time with frustrated parents, failed interventions, and meetings to deal with these problems.

> *"Someone in the school needs to be committed to doing this process for students with TBI. If you don't do a process like this, with information gathering, getting everyone together, monitoring, revising, many times you end up working on assumptions that someone made about the student, or things that maybe were true about*

*the student before, and aren't true any more. You have to take this kind of integrated approach, especially around problem-solving issues, or you may get headed up the wrong creek.*

*I think as educators we get into, 'Well, I know this is a good thing and I know it's gonna work, so I'm just going to go ahead and try it.' Whereas if you consulted with other educators, or with the parents, or even with the student, you may find out it's not going to work for one reason or another.*

*High school kids don't have time for people to experiment with every bright idea somebody has. They need people to put their heads together and plan carefully and pay attention to whether what they are doing is working."*

Teacher and mother of student with a brain injury.

# Gathering Information

Gathering information is the key to effective planning, implementation, and monitoring of any educational program. It is especially critical for a student with a brain injury.

Information gathering helps...

- prepare for IEP and other meetings
- understand what each team member already knows about the student and what information is missing
- identify previous interventions that were not successful and determine why were ineffective
- determine why difficulties occur in some settings and not in others
- provide the team with the "big picture" or holistic view of the student's school program
- streamline planning so the team can accomplish its work efficiently.

## Importance

*Elise's mother and special education teacher would like her to be more independent in getting around school and following class schedules. Information from Elise's teachers and observations between classes indicate that Elise relies on prompts and assistance from teachers, instructional assistants, and peers to know when and where she is supposed to go. However, through the information gathering process, the facilitator learns that Elise has no trouble keeping track of when her favorite television programs are on or when she needs to be ready to leave for bowling, swimming, and other activities. An interview with Elise indicates that although she can tell time and read a schedule, she likes to ask people for help because it gives her an excuse to talk to them.*

Information gathering is critical for understanding and meeting the needs of a student with a brain injury. The first step in planning an effective program for any student is to become knowledgeable about the student, the school and community environment. It's tempting to skip this step if a team feels they already know the school and the student; however, doing so may result in wasted time and resources.

# Step 1
# Distribute information forms to student's teachers

The Teacher/Staff Information Form asks each teacher to provide information about the student's abilities. This form can also be used with instructional assistants and support personnel who work regularly with the student (physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, vocational staff, and aides). The person who is coordinating the student's special education plan can easily distribute this form by attaching an explanatory memo as shown in the sample memo below. **Tip:** Giving a short turn-around time encourages teachers not to put off completing the form.

Memo to accompany teacher/staff information form

Date:

To: All staff working with (student name)

From:

Re: Information Gathering

Attached is an information form to be completed for the above student. This will help gather information to identify goals, strengths, problem areas, and an action plan for this student. First, I need input from all staff who work with this student. Please complete the form and return it to me by _____.

**The information you have about this student is extremely important.** Please complete the form even if you do not intend to come to the meeting or be on the student's support team.

Thank you.

## Teacher/Staff Information Form

Student name _____ Date _____

Person completing form _____ Subject area/class _____

**General Information**

1. **Academic Strengths** (motivated to learn; strong reading, writing, and /or math skills; applies self, etc.)

2. **Academic Challenges** (skill deficits, organizational, memory, motivational problems, attention or attitude problems, etc.)

3. **Social/Behavioral Strengths** (sense of humor, willingness to seek help, enjoys social interaction, etc.)

4. **Social/Behavioral Challenges** (aggressive/disruptive behavior, inability to read social cues, inappropriate comments, inability to control impulsive behavior, etc.)

Lash & Associates Publishing/Training gives permission to copy and distribute all forms in this manual.

**Current School Organizational Aids**

Check all that student currently uses or has available. Circle number that best describes their effectiveness.

1 = not at all effective
2 = somewhat effective
NA = does not apply
3 = effective much of time
4 = very effective

| Applies | | Effectiveness (circle) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | Homework list | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Writes notes to self | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Wears a watch | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Uses a comprehensive electronic organizational system | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Uses a written organizational system | |
| ☐ | • uses assignment sheet | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | • uses monthly calendar | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | • uses a written time schedule | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | • other: | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Asks friends or family for needed information | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Other _____ | 1 2 3 4 NA |

If student has previously used any of the organizational aids listed above, but is currently not using them, please indicate which ones and explain why they are no longer used.

**Current accommodations provided for your class**

Check all that apply and circle number that best describes their effectiveness.

| Applies | | Effectiveness (circle) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | Instructional assistant | 1 2 3 4 NA |

Describe role with student:

| Applies | | Effectiveness (circle) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | Peer helper<br>Describe peer's role with student | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Extra time to complete assignments | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Extra time to complete tests | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Grading accommodations<br>Describe modification | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Modified assignments<br>Describe | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Modified or alternative materials<br>Describe | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Assignment tracking sheet | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Assignment hand out | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Assignments posted | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Verbal reminders to record assignments | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Reminders to turn in assignments | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Specifications for filing class papers in student notebook | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Other accommodations for recording, tracking, completing, turning in assignments | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Seating accommodations, classroom position and seating type | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Classroom modifications to minimize distraction | 1 2 3 4 NA |

| Applies | | Effectiveness (circle) |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | Teacher checks in to get student started and keep on task<br>number of check-ins per period _____ | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Behavioral expectations are posted | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Verbal reminders of behavioral expectations | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Verbal corrections for behavior<br>times per period ___ | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Student is on behavior management program<br>Describe | 1 2 3 4 NA |
| ☐ | Other accommodations _____ | 1 2 3 4 NA |

If any of the above accommodations have been tried for this student but are not currently used, please explain which accommodations and why they are no longer used.

**Other Information**

Has the student ever shared goals or long term plans with you or classmates?

Has the student discussed or written about interests or hobbies?

**Other Comments**

# Step 2
# Send parent information form home with a return envelope

You probably have already spoken with parents about the student's progress and their concerns. However, you may want to phone and let parents know a letter is coming and explain that you are asking them to complete forms that will help school staff better understand your child.

These forms (Teacher Information and Parent Information) can also be completed in interview format - in person or by phone.

**(Copy onto school letterhead)**

Date

Name

Street

City, State, Zip

Dear :

Enclosed is an information form to help us better understand your child's needs. This information will help us develop an effective educational program.

I am collecting similar information from others who work with your child. I will also be talking with your child to gather her input on progress, needs, and goals.

Please complete the form and return it to me by_____.
If you have questions, please call me at ( ) _____.

Thank you. I look forward to meeting with you and working with your child on this project.

Sincerely,

# Parent Information Form

Child _____ Date _____

Person completing form _____ Tel. #_____

Relationship to student _____

## Purpose

Our goal is to help students with brain injuries function successfully and as independently as possible to reach their goals. Based on information provided by you, school staff, and your child, the team will identify supports. Please provide as much information as you can.

## Learning and memory

Check and describe any areas of concern for your child.

- ☐ Remembering daily events and personal experiences
- ☐ Learning new information
- ☐ Starting and following through with a planned activity at a specific time
- ☐ Loss of memory for events before injury
- ☐ Organizing materials and actions to get a task done
- ☐ Understanding verbal and/or written directions
- ☐ Paying attention and staying focused

- ☐ Ignoring distractions
- ☐ Reasoning and problem solving
- ☐ Other

## Academic strengths

(e.g., motivated to learn, strong reading, spelling or math skills; applies self; good written language; etc.)

## Other learning and physical factors

(Check and describe any areas that apply)

- ☐ Language problems affecting ability to **read, write**, or **type** entries
- ☐ Visual problems affecting the ability to **read, write,** or **type** entries
- ☐ Hearing or language processing problems affecting ability to **understand** others or **listen** to a tape recorder
- ☐ Physical difficulties affecting the ability to **write**, **manipulate** pages or electronic keys, or carry school materials
- ☐ Problems with fatigue
- ☐ Other

## Social factors

**Interactions with peers and behaviors at school**
(Check and describe any areas of concern)

- ☐ Starting or joining activities with peers
- ☐ Level of support and understanding from peers
- ☐ Controlling impulsive behavior
- ☐ Aggressive behavior towards others
- ☐ Makes inappropriate comments
- ☐ Low anger and/or frustration tolerance
- ☐ Disruptive classroom behavior
- ☐ Ability to understand social cues
- ☐ Other

**Acceptance and awareness of impairment**
(Check the item that best describes your child)

- ☐ Shows limited understanding or awareness of impairment
- ☐ Seems to be in denial (difficulty accepting changes)
- ☐ Acknowledges some changes but does not think aids are necessary
- ☐ Openly discusses learning problems; inconsistent about willingness to use aids
- ☐ Appears willing to learn and use some aids

**Behavioral Strengths**

(e.g., good sense of humor, willingness to seek help, enjoys social interaction, etc.)

## Accommodations

(Strategies, interventions, and supports used at home to help your child overcome learning, behavioral and social challenges)

**Current accommodations** Check the items that apply on the left. In the first right column, check any supports that are currently available. In the second right column, check any that your child needs but are not available.

**Organizational aids**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| ☐ | Electronic or written planner system | ☐ has/uses | ☐ needs |
| ☐ | Asks friends or staff for help | ☐ has/uses | ☐ needs |
| ☐ | Writes notes to self | ☐ has/uses | ☐ needs |
| ☐ | Wears watch | ☐ has/uses | ☐ needs |
| ☐ | Homework list | ☐ has/uses | ☐ needs |
| ☐ | Other | ☐ has/uses | ☐ needs |

**Managing assignments**

☐ Uses one of the above organizational aids_____
☐ Relies on others to track and find assignments (explain)

**Doing homework**

☐ Uses one of the above organizational aids_____
☐ Others provide reminders to get started on homework (explain)

☐ Others provide encouragement to keep working and complete homework (explain)

☐ Others help do the homework (explain)

**Remedial help**

☐ Review basic math Who helps_____
☐ Review reading Who helps_____
☐ Review spelling Who helps_____
☐ Review writing skills Who helps_____

Other types of academic support provided at home (describe)

For those checked, describe and indicate how effective you think the accommodation is.

If any of the above accommodations have been tried but are not currently used, please explain.

What accommodations currently in place at school are most helpful for your child?

Are there any accommodations not currently in place that you think would be helpful to your child? Any that your child thinks would be helpful?

## Other information

What are your child's interests or hobbies?

What are your child's greatest strengths?

What is most challenging for your child?

Has your child ever described goals or plans following high school to you or other family members?

What are your goals after high school for your child?

## Other comments

# Step 3
# Collect forms

Offer to conduct a 5-minute interview to get the information from staff who have not completed their forms. Use the form to record teacher/staff responses. If several teachers have not returned forms, present the option of a group interview. Note: Conduct all interviews in private settings to protect student confidentiality.

If necessary, prompt parents to return forms. Offer the option of going over the form on the phone and filling in responses.

# Step 4
# Interview student

Helping the student think about short and long-term goals is an important aspect of effective educational planning and for preparing for the transition to adulthood after high school. This is also an opportunity to get the student's perspective on what is going well in school, what areas are difficult, strategies that have been helpful, and those that have not. There are several ways to gather information from student:

- interview with student
- interviews with teachers and or parents to clarify responses on the information form
- short, informal observations in classrooms or home/community settings

The Student Interview Guide provides a structure for gathering information on the student's perspective of goals, strengths, and challenges. Despite the formality of the written questions, this interview can be informal and low-key. Portions of the interview guide can even be used with the student conversationally one topic at a time, over a period of several days. The exchange of information is facilitated if the interviewer chooses a style that is familiar and comfortable for the student.

*Because Aaron tended to clam up when asked a direct question, the interviewer brought up the topics on the interview guide very indirectly. One day she prompted a short discussion: "What do you want to do after high school?" with a small group of students that included Aaron. The next day she asked Aaron casually how his classes were going. When he said, "Fine," she followed up with "What's your favorite class right now?"*

*Gradually she got Aaron talking about what was hard and what was easier for him in each of his classes. She also got a sense of how comfortable he was with his current level of independence at school by observing his interactions with peer tutors and instructional assistants.*

For students whose parents are closely involved with the educational team, describe how you are gathering information from the student. If parents are willing, they can continue the discussion at home, using the think sheets as guides. Always keep in mind that the educational planning should be **student-driven**. That is, the plans the team makes and the accommodations they recommend are based on the student's goals. Unless the student "buys in" to whatever plans the team suggests, they are unlikely to be successful.

*"This kind of process needs to be student-centered. I think that's really critical, and we tend to ignore that. It needs to have procedures that empower the student, particularly at the secondary level. I think if you're not empowering the student, you're really just wasting your time.*

*We did a number of things with my son that other people chose and he went along with. But he never used them. I mean, they were all things that other people decided were good for him. It was like, 'Well, that's THEIR system. That's not MY system. I don't use that system. They write it down, they hand it to me. It's their thing, not mine.' "*

The following materials help the student prepare for the meeting by:

- describing what the meeting will be like
- describing the student's role in the meeting
- getting the student thinking about strengths, challenges and goals.

## Preparing the student for meetings

This may be an IEP or a meeting that will help carry out the IEP, or a meeting to gather information in preparation for the IEP. It might simply be a meeting to address a particular issue that has come up for the student at school.

Step 1 Explain that the purpose of the meeting is to help the student:

- function more independently at school
- manage materials, schedules, assignments
- reach goals for school and life

Emphasize that nothing has been decided. There will be a meeting with the student, parents, and school staff to decide on a plan or system to help the student succeed in school. Give assurance that the student will be an important part of this meeting. Nothing will be done without the student's full agreement and cooperation.

Step 2 Describe what will happen in the meeting

The student will be less anxious if you explain what will happen in the meeting in advance. The following script suggests a positive way to describe to the student what will occur in the meeting. Rather than reading the script to the student, try to engage the student in a dialogue and encourage questions and comments over several sessions. Depending on the student, preparation may need to be modified to prevent the student from feeling overwhelmed.

The meeting will be divided into 6 parts. First, we will learn more about what you want. We will ask...

**Who is [student name]?**

"In this part of the meeting the team will talk about YOU: Your likes, dislikes, quirks, traits, strengths. This will be very positive. No criticism allowed!"

**Goals**

"Next, we will talk about goals. This is your chance to tell the group about your short-term and long-term goals, your hopes and dreams. This is a very important part of the meeting. We need to know where you want to go, so we can help you figure out how to get there."

(If the student cannot identify long term goals, focus on very short term goals, such as completing a current class project, passing a class, getting a high enough GPA to qualify for a class trip.)

**Obstacles**

"Then the group will discuss obstacles or things that are hard for you and might keep you from reaching your goals. You will need to be honest about what's hard or challenging for you and what things you would like to be able to do better."

**Ways to overcome challenges**

"This is a brainstorming section of the meeting. All suggestions will be accepted, so you can be as creative as you want. The only rule is you can't critize someone else's idea."

**Deciding on a plan**

"The group will look at the ideas for overcoming obstacles to your goals and together will decide which ones to try. You don't have to agree to anything. The most important thing for you to remember is: Speak up. Let the group know what you think. If you are respectful and give reasons why you don't like certain ideas, they will either try to solve the problem or choose a different idea from the list. If you aren't sure about a certain idea, let the group know but give it a try."

**Trying the plan**

"After the meeting people on the team will be trying out some of the ideas and reporting back to the group about information they gather or about how things are working. Cooperate and give the team your opinions. If something isn't working or you don't like it, let the team know and they'll change it."

## Summary

Ask the student to be thinking about these topics. A student think-sheet is provided with these materials. Go over the Think Sheet with the student.

**Communication -** To check comprehension, ask the student to paraphrase the information you have provided.

> *Teacher: I know I gave you a lot of information to think about. Could you just describe to me what you expect to happen at the meeting?*

# Student Interview Guide

**Student Think Sheets**

Who is _____

Likes...

Doesn't like...

Is good at...

Is getting better at...

Wants to do more...

Wants to do less of...

## Helping the student develop goals

**By the end of this school year, I would like to...**

**Next year I want my life to include:**

What kind of classes

What activities

What relationships

What accomplishments

**By the time I finish high school, I would like...**

**I want my future as an adult to include...**

What kind of living arrangements

What kind of work

What kind of relationships

**Things that might keep me from reaching my goals...**

Barriers to this year's goals

Barriers to next year's goals

Barriers to long-term goals

**Ways to get around barriers**

Skills to work on

Information to get

Help I can use

Who can provide it

# Optional Step 5
# Get more information if needed

If you have questions about responses from any staff member or from the parent, check these out directly. Some facilitators have found it helpful to reflect information the individual has given, then ask for clarification

*To teacher: I notice on the information form that you indicated that Jason gets belligerent when you ask him to work on his homework in class. Could you tell me more specifically about what leads up to that and describe his behavior?*

*To instructional assistant: You mentioned on the form that the student did better two years ago when he used a different kind of assignment tracking system. Do you have a copy of that I could look at?*

*To parent: Thank you for getting the form back so quickly. I was wondering if you could tell me more about how you work with your son on homework assignments.*

# Optional Step 6
# Observe, if possible

Taking the extra time to observe the student in a variety of settings provides valuable information about how the student functions that is not available any other way. Teachers are busy conducting their classes, and even the most observant teacher doesn't see how each student responds to instruction or uses free time. If your schedule permits and staff members agree, observe during class or transition times that staff have indicated might illustrate issues of concern. Or, if the student is successful in one class and not in others, observe to see what accommodations or classroom features contribute to this success. Use the observation guide provided.

*"I usually get my information from talking to teachers about how students with brain injuries are doing in their classes. I decided to take the extra time to observe Elliot in a couple of his classes. I couldn't believe what a different perspective it gave me on his situation. I'm sure it looks to his teachers like he knows exactly what's going on in class all the time, so when he doesn't turn in the work they think he's just lazy.*

*But watching him, I could see he was completely lost. He tries to get help from other kids; he tries to follow along. He doesn't want to call attention to himself. But he's just lost without some kind of accommodation for his brain injury."*

Special Education Teacher

# Observation Guide

Teacher _____ Student _____

Class _____ Period _____ # Students _____

Draw a map of the room arrangement

- Show where the student is sitting
- Indicate who the student interacts with during class
- Type of activity (lecture, project/assignment, discussion)
- Describe what the student is doing.

How does this compare with what she or he is supposed to be doing? With what other students are doing? If the student is doing something different, why?

How does the student interact with the teacher? How does this compare with other students' interactions with the teacher? How do peers react to the adults' interactions with the student?

What incidents or interactions is the student unaware of?

What incidents or interactions is the teacher unaware of?

What accommodations are made for the student's cognitive or psychosocial impairments?

Do they appear to be effective?

How does what you are seeing compare with what you have seen in other settings? (classes, hallways, lunchroom, at home, in the community?)

# Step 7
# Putting it all together

The amount of time needed to complete the Information Gathering Process varies, depending on your knowledge of and experience with the student, the input of teachers and staff, and the interest of parents. Recording information is a method to ensure that all perspectives are heard, strengths are noted, concerns discussed, and options considered for the action plan.

*The information gathering process revealed that some teachers were not aware Steven had a brain injury, although they knew he had trouble completing assignments. They saw him as bright, but disorganized, with a bit of an attitude.*

*Steven's parents expressed relief that after failing his first year of high school, Steven is doing much better sophomore year, with his whole family helping a lot with homework. They are starting to worry about whether they are helping too much. In his interview, Steven talked about how he tries to track assignments. He also indicated that he is starting to think, and worry, about what his future will be like.*

With all the information that is gathered, sorting out what's important can seem overwhelming. The point of writing down the results of the information gathering is not to produce more paper that sits in a folder or file, but to provide a framework from which an action plan can develop. The following Planning Form is an instrument to help you to prepare to run an efficient, productive meeting that acknowledges a variety of perspectives on the student's situation. Think of the form not as more paperwork, but as a tool you can modify and use creatively to make the meeting a success.

# Planning Form for Action Plan Meeting

## Who is (student)?

What characteristics of the student were mentioned frequently during information gathering?

What characteristics were noted by only one or two people and would be helpful to include to better understand this student?

Person who could contribute this characteristic at the meeting.
Positive characteristic Source

Are there any negative characteristics of the student that need to be discussed?

How could you help the team reframe these characteristics in a positive way? (e.g., Reframe stubborn as determined or persistent; bossy as has take-charge style; argumentative as has strong opinions and defends them.)
Negative characteristic Reframed characteristic

## Goals/hopes/dreams

List the goals, hopes, and dreams that the STUDENT has told you about or listed.

List goals, hopes and dreams that teachers and staff have attributed to the student.

List goals that the parent thinks the student has.

List goals that the parent has for the student.

Goal Source

Note the degree of agreement or divergence in these views.

Areas of agreement:

Areas of divergence:

Topics for discussion:

How do the goals that the student has identified relate to daily school activities?

**Examples**

The student whose long-term goal is to live independently needs to accomplish the short-term goals of learning to manage schedules and finances, graduating and getting a job. The student whose long-term goal is to graduate with her class needs to complete the short-term goal of turning in assignments.

**Long-term goal** **Related short-term goals**

If the student is unclear about long-term goals, what short-term goals can the team focus on? (Passing a class; getting a driving evaluation to determine whether student can/should get a license; riding the city bus independently).

## Obstacles

Obstacles to reaching goals that all or most team members recognize, including the student.

Are there obstacles that most team members recognize that the student is unaware of or denies?

Are there barriers that staff and/or the student have problems with that the parent does not recognize?

Are there barriers that are related to lack of information about brain injury?

| Obstacle | Identified by | Not recognized by |
|---|---|---|

If there is disagreement about what obstacles are present, how can it be resolved? Suggestions include...

- Have assessments, medical or neuropsychological reports available.
- Have knowledgeable personnel available (school psychologist, brain injury consultant, behavior consultant).
- Acknowledge student's strengths and improvements to avoid focusing on challenges or difficulties.

Are there obstacles that were not mentioned in the information gathering that are not student-centered? (For example, only one English class for sophomores; no instructional aide available third period; staff's lack of training in brain injury; no appropriate transition services available for this student).

Who needs to be present at meetings if these obstacles come up?

- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Director of Special Education
- ☐ Administrator
- ☐ _____

If these people aren't present, how will these issues be addressed in the action plan?

**Strategies**

Are there any team members who may not be familiar with or comfortable with brainstorming (i.e., accepting all suggestions without discussion of feasibility?) How will you address their concerns?

In the information gathering, did any strategies (current or used in the past) emerge that have been effective for the student?

How will you ensure that these are included in the discussion?

Are there any strategies that some team members will promote that other team members may oppose?

Describe the different views of the strategy.

| View | Held by |
|---|---|

How will you facilitate this discussion?

How will you ensure that the student's views are strongly considered in this discussion?

**Action plan**

Are there any constraints on possible action plan activities that you should make team members aware of or that you should check out before the meeting?

- ☐ Availability of funds for devices, materials, training of staff
- ☐ State/local policies regarding graduation requirements
- ☐ Lack of flexibility in school schedules
- ☐ Unwillingness by staff to make accommodations
- ☐ Other _____

What administrators or other school personnel should be present to address these issues, if they arise?

Remember, some of these issues can be investigated as part of the action plan.

**Level of independence**

Assess the student's level of satisfaction with his current level of independence.

What factors prevent the student from seeking/achieving more independence?

- ☐ Parental safety concerns
- ☐ Parental expectations
- ☐ Staff/peers who do too much
- ☐ School safety concerns
- ☐ School expectations
- ☐ Other _____

## Checklist for Information Gathering

Use this to track the steps in the information gathering process.

| | Date | Date Due | Date Returned |
|---|---|---|---|
| Distribute Staff/Teacher Information Forms | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Mail Parent Information Form | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Conduct student interview | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Prompt return of information forms | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Conduct interviews with staff | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Conduct interview with parent | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Summarize findings | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Collect additional information if necessary<br>Ask questions and observe | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Complete Planning Form | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| Schedule Action Plan Meeting | _____ | _____ | _____ |

# Running the Meeting

## Introduction

When you have completed the information gathering process, you will have a clear picture of the strengths and needs of the student whose school program you are helping plan. Now the challenge is to involve the student's whole team in developing an action plan, while continuing to keep the focus on the student.

Like other students with complex needs, students with brain injuries often receive services from a number of school-based professionals. A student's team may consist of general and special educators, occupational, physical and speech/ language therapists, a school psychologist, one or more instructional assistants, and one or both parents.

With so many adults involved, each with a slightly different perspective on what's best for the student, it can be difficult to remember to include the student's perspective. However, giving students who are in middle school or junior high a role in planning their educational program will improve their motivation and commitment. For older students in high school and about to transition to adulthood, full participation in planning and implementing their instructional program is critical.

Here we present a step-by-step process for conducting student-centered planning meetings that gives everyone a chance to have their views heard, but keeps the student's perspective central.

## Step 1 Prepare for the Initial IEP Meeting

If you are well prepared for your initial IEP meeting, it is likely be smooth and productive. Preparing for the meeting involves the following steps:

- invite team members to participate (in writing)
- get materials ready
- arrange for co-facilitator (optional)

**Invite team members**

To ensure good attendance and participation, make sure to check with team members prior to the meeting and provide them with information in writing about the meeting several days in advance. (See Forms and handouts section for sample letter inviting team members to the meeting.)

**Get materials ready**

Materials you'll need include:

- agenda (optional)
- flip Chart
- markers
- snacks/drinks (optional)

Having a written agenda for each team member helps everyone keep track of where the discussion is going. (See Forms and handouts section.)

An important part of any student-centered meeting is recording participants' responses so that the group can track the discussion. It is also helpful to have a written record of comments to refer back to during the process to be able to reflect on how goals are related to barriers are related to strategies, for example. Colorful markers and a large flip chart, or sheets of paper taped to the wall or white board, allow the group to follow along easily. It is helpful to have the agenda items written out at the top of each page of the flip chart.

Having drinks and snacks available as team members arrive is appreciated, especially if the meeting is held before or after school.

**Arrange for co-facilitator**

It is helpful to have someone (other than a team member if possible) record comments on the flip chart during the session. This allows the facilitator to concentrate on keeping the process going and on monitoring the communication for subtle signs of disagreement, reservations, or other indications that more discussion is needed. Notes on recording: Encourage the recorder to be creative and colorful.

A checklist for preparing for the meeting is provided in the Forms and handout section.

## Role of the facilitator

As the facilitator, you have several important roles, to:

- Keep the process moving (team members' time is valuable, including your own). If you keep meetings to the agreed length, team members are more likely to feel positive about meetings and come back for the next meeting.
- Ensure that everyone gets a chance to present his or her perspective.
- Ensure that the dominant perspective is the student's.
- Promote communication so that all parties really "hear" what the others are saying.
- Encourage agreement on an action plan that addresses team concerns but represents the student's goals.

## Step 2 Conduct the Initial Student- centered Planning Meeting

The first student-centered meeting is the most critical, because it sets the tone for how the team will work together. As you will see, the meeting follows a set logical format. Because the agenda for meeting is designed to be flexible and tailored to the student and school context, it is also easy to modify.

### Agenda for Initial Student-centered Planning Meeting

- Introductions/Purpose
- Who is The Student?
- Goals/Hopes and Dreams
- Obstacles to Achieving Goals
- Strategies to Overcome Obstacles
- Action Plan
- Closure

**Ways to Keep the Meeting to One Hour or Less**

1. Practice your opening remarks. Keep them under five minutes.

2. Send reminders of the meeting place and time the day before the meeting.

3. Start on time. Don't wait for latecomers and don't review for them when they arrive. Those who are on time will appreciate it, and those who are late will be on time for follow-up meetings.

4. Decide before the meeting approximately how long to spend on each section. Allocate sufficient time to sections that will require the most discussion. Don't cut off conversation to keep to your schedule, but use your planning as a guideline to keep the meeting moving.

5. Give team members a chance to raise issues. If you know there are important issues to discuss and they have not been raised, bring them up early enough so they can be discussed thoroughly.

6. If a team member dominates the discussion, tactfully but firmly call on others or move on to the next topic. Sometimes students may be so excited to be asked for an opinion that they talk on and on. Summarize what the student said, state that you are anxious to find out what he/she thinks about some other issues, and indicate that you are going to move the discussion on.

7. Adjourn on time. This will make team members more willing to come to follow-up meetings.

The following section outlines important points to remember as you facilitate each section of the meeting.

**Introductions/Purpose**

Ask team members to introduce themselves and explain their connections with the student. Following introductions, go over the following points:

**Explain Student-Centered Planning Process:** This is an on-going process that a team can use to help the student become more successful and independent.

**State the goals of meeting are to:**

- work together to help the student identify his or her goals
- plan ways to help the student accomplish them
- increase the student's independence and success in school

**Provide an overview of what the meeting will be like:**

- how long
- what happens next (follow-up meetings to monitor progress, modify goals)
- tone (informal but on-task and productive)

**Emphasize participation**

Remind everyone that each participant is a valued member of the team and is encouraged to participate.

Although everyone present should be encouraged to contribute, pay particular attention to the student's involvement. You can do this by checking with the student frequently to monitor that s/he is understanding and whether the student agrees with the information that is being presented. *The student has veto power over everything written by the recorder.*

> *Kyle's team had come up with several potential strategies to help him manage his school schedule independently, and they were excitedly planning and discussing them. They had just written "shop for watch with beeper" on the action plan. The facilitator noted that Kyle was not participating.*
>
> *She asked, "Kyle, is there anything about the Action Plan so far that you don't like?" At first Kyle just shrugged, but the facilitator encouraged him to say what was bothering him. Finally Kyle said that he hates watches with beepers because everybody looks at the person whose watch is making noise and it's embar - rassing. The team agreed to look at different options.*

**Set clear expectations**

Let team members know that they will be asked at the end of the meeting to take on parts of the action plan. If they feel they cannot participate that's OK; their presence at the meeting is helpful and appreciated.

**Explain brainstorming procedures**

All responses are accepted without judgment. Tell team members that in this part of the process, it's OK to dream and be unrealistic.

## Who is the Student?

In this part of the agenda, the group lists positive characteristics of the student. The purpose is to set a positive tone, and to reflect on the student's many attributes.

**Ask the group to think about positive characteristics and attributes of the student**.

What are the special things that each team member associates with the person? What are the student's strengths, talents, and abilities?

**The recorder records the statements.**

This can be done colorfully on the flip chart under the heading WHO IS (name of student)? Negative statements may be reframed in a positive light.

> *During the "Who Is Carlos" section of the IEP meeting, his special education teacher offered that Jerry was "very stubborn."*
>
> *"So," said the facilitator, "You see Carlos as very determined. He knows what he wants and is going to get it?" Everyone nodded as the facilitator noted "determined" on the board.*

The "Who Is" section of the IEP meeting is crucial because it creates a positive tone for the meeting.

> *During the "Who Is?" stage of the IEP meeting Emily started to look a little more interested, and she was participating by the end of this section. She offered a few spontaneous comments. She seemed to accept her final list of who her team thought she was:*

Hard working
Likes antique dolls
Motivated to try new things
Good hiker, skier, adventurous
Campfire member
Owl not a lark
Has come a long way
Cute
Curious
Strong
Determined
Eager learner
Observant

This step sometimes profoundly affects the family and can be very emotional. It may be the first time parents have heard positive remarks about the student from school personnel. Sometimes parents are surprised to hear that the difficult behaviors students exhibit at home are not present at school. The student may be very anxious at the beginning of this process, wondering what people will say. Most students end up enjoying this portion of the process and the comments made here can provide a boost to self-esteem.

## Goals/Hopes and Dreams

The portion of the meeting that deals with goals begins as a brainstorming session. At this point in the process, no goals get dismissed.

### Always begin with the student's hopes and dreams

Check in frequently to make sure that hopes and dreams and goals mentioned by others are ones also held by the student. Team members can remind the student of goals mentioned during the information gathering process, or remind the student of activities he or she enjoys that might indicate interest in a future goal.

Sometimes a student may be reluctant to share a dream that someone else has mentioned because it seems too remote or unlikely. Sometimes adults are uncomfortable when a student lists a goal that seems unrealistic. Remind the group that this is an opportunity to picture the ideal and list the goal along with more attainable ones. Knowing the student's hopes and dreams will help the group plan how some aspects can be achieved. Working toward an important goal can be a powerful motivator.

### Try to generate both long-term and short term-goals

For younger students, long-term goals may be too remote to hold their interest. Tying long-term goals to more immediate ones can be satisfying for all team members.

> *Melanie's primary goal was to graduate with her class, but other goals she thought important were "getting my belly button pierced, getting a driver's license and getting some better clothes".*

*Other team members wanted to talk about how Melanie could keep track of assignments and turn papers in on time, in order to reach her goal of graduating.*

*In the action plan, the team dealt first with Melanie's goals. Her grandmother agreed to consider letting her have her navel pierced after she turned 18, if she passed all her classes. She also agreed to make an appointment for Melanie to be tested by a driving evaluator to see what kind of training she would need to get a driver's license.*

*The team also set up a system for Melanie to earn points for writing down assignments, turning assignments in on time, and meeting other obligations that would help her do better in classes. Melanie could trade the points for cash to be used for "getting some better clothes".*

## Obstacles to Achieving Goals

At this point in the agenda, the team looks at the prioritized goals one by one and determines what is preventing the student from achieving each goal. Obstacles may have many sources — e.g., student's learning challenges, features of the school schedule, finances. As a facilitator, your main roles are to clarify what the specific obstacles are, and to keep the process positive.

### Avoid jumping ahead to strategies before going through each of the steps

It is especially tempting for the group to try to address one obstacle at a time instead of listing all the obstacles first. Try to keep them focused on obstacles until all are listed for at least one goal. Depending on how much time is remaining, the team may want to move to strategies after listing the obstacles for the top priority goal, then go back and list obstacles for goal 2, etc.

### Sometimes inadequate information can be an obstacle

For example, a team may feel that they don't know a student's potential because so much work is done with assistance from others. In some cases, "insufficient information" may be a key obstacle to the student and the team for designing effective supports to help reach stated goals.

*Jack's team came up with quite a few obstacles that kept him from reaching his goals: problems with his vision, lack of job skills, problems with anger management.*

*When his mental health counselor mentioned cognitive problems as a possible obstacle, the facilitator commented that she really didn't know how severe his learning and memory problems were. The team noted that so much of his work was done with adult assistance, it was hard to tell what Jack could and couldn't do. Formal testing hadn't been done for over 3 years.*

*The team agreed that not knowing what Jack's cognitive limitations were was an obstacle in itself.*

**Prioritize which goals are important to work on right now**

Once all the obstacles have been listed, have the group select which goals/ obstacles they want to start with. Begin with the student, but encourage team members to discuss why other goals might deserve priority: deadlines are approaching, some goals must be reached before others can be attained, etc. Remind the team that even though some goals are listed as lower priorities, they are not dropping off the list. At the next meeting, progress toward goals will be reviewed. As goals are attained, new ones can be added.

## Strategies to Overcome Obstacles

At this step in the process, the team brainstorms creative strategies to get around the identified obstacles.

Before discussing strategies, review goals and obstacles and come to a consensus about any patterns. What seems to be most important to the student? What obstacles need to be addressed most urgently? What obstacles are causing problems in more than one area? The team may decide to tackle just the most urgent obstacles (and goals) at the first meeting.

List all ideas, no matter how improbable, expensive, idealistic, etc. The brainstorming portion should go fairly quickly; it is important not to get attached to any one solution until all strategies are considered. Once everyone's ideas are listed, move to the action plan.

## Action Plan

The team, led by the student, selects several strategies to try, or comes up with a plan for getting additional information and sets another meeting.

The action plan is formed by listing three columns on the flip chart (a blank Action Plan form appears in Forms and handouts section):

The facilitator asks for volunteers to implement the various strategies, and the chart is filled in accordingly. It is important to fill in the date by which the task can be completed.

**Sample Action Plan for Rachel**

| Who | What | By When |
|---|---|---|
| **Goal 1** | **Get a driver's license** | |
| Mom | Make appointment to have student's vision assessed. | Feb 1 |
| Teacher | Take results of eye exam to driving evaluator. | Feb 15 |
| **Goal 2** | **a) Get around (esp. to work) independently.**<br>**b) Help Mom get over her anxiety about this goal.** | |
| Mom, Rachel | Mom will ride bus with daughter to 3places: home to school, school to work, work to home. | Mar. 15 |
| | Mom and Rachel will talk with parents of students who have received training and now ride independently. | Mar. 20 |
| | Mom will observe teachers training bus riding readiness skills in the classroom, then will observe students who have received training riding the bus. | Mar. 30 |
| **Goal 3** | **Function more independently at school and at home.** | |
| Sp Ed Teacher, IA Speech Pathologist | Meet with Rachel and review notebook organizers | Feb. 15 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher & Speech Pathologist | Devise instructional program, implement, and monitor. | Feb. 15 |
| OT | Obtain sample electronic cueing devices and assess Rachel's ability to access them. Teacher and IA will experiment with using environment cues such as bells, timers, clock chimes. | March 1 |

## Closure

Help the group summarize and assess the events of the meeting. You might want to ask someone else to summarize. Encourage team members to give feedback or to comment on how the meeting went. It is especially important to check in with the student to make sure the student is comfortable with the action plan.

*Toward the end of the meeting, the special education teacher turned to Joey and asked him how he felt.*

*"Are you OK?" she asked.*

*"No" he said.*

*"What's missing?" she asked. "Would you like to add something else—like Driver's Training?"*

*"Yeah." Joey replied.*

*"Is the Action Plan OK now?" asked the special education teacher.*

*"Not really." he said.*

*"What is it?" she asked. After a long pause he mumbled something about taking other classes that aren't in the resource room.*

*"Are you worried that we'll push you into classes other kids take?" the teacher asked.*

*"Yeah." he answered.*

*"Did you hear me talking to other kids today about that?"*

*"Yeah."*

*"And you think we want to change your schedule and make you take those classes too?"*

*"Yeah," said Joey.*

*His reticence was about feeling uncomfortable with changes that would involve more difficult classes where teachers were less supportive.*

*The special education teacher reassured Joey that this was not the case, that he would stay in the resource room until he was ready to take more regular classes. He seemed relieved. As the meeting concluded, she said to him, "I'm proud of the way you communicated your feelings."*

Based on the completion dates set for the action plan tasks, another meeting date should be set to review the outcomes of implementing the strategies.

Within a week of the first meeting, mail a summary to each team member. Include the next date, time and location of the next meeting. Encourage team members to communicate between meetings via notes, e-mail, phone, or informal meetings.

Sample meeting summaries appear in the Forms and handouts section.

## Step 3 Hold regular review meetings

It may not be necessary to reconvene the entire team to review progress on the action plan. Only those members who will help determine the next steps need to attend. The group's decisions and actions can be recorded on the IEP Follow-up Action Plan (Page 59).

## Overview

Remind the group of the purpose of the meeting and what they hope to accomplish.

### Review progress on the action plan

Team members first report on progress in implementing strategies. Those present decide on next steps to reach goals. Sometimes additional information will have been obtained that indicates that a goal should be put on hold or that progress on it will be slow. You may suggest selecting a different or an additional goal to work on in order to promote a sense of success and accomplishment. Be sure the group and the student understand that the team is not giving up on the original goal.

If another goal is selected, review the obstacles and strategies recorded at the meeting, or generate new strategies, and formulate an action plan.

### Update action plan

The new action plan has new strategies for the original goal and perhaps strategies to be implemented toward achieving a new goal.

# Summary

The student-centered planning process is an excellent vehicle for efficiently selecting, implementing, and monitoring the effectiveness of strategies to address the diverse needs of students with brain injuries. The format allows multiple perspectives to help shape the final plan, but with skillful facilitation, the primary focus stays on the student. We have presented methods for gathering information from other educators, the student and parents. Procedures for effectively facilitating the meeting are also provided. The process will be most effective when the action plan developed at the planning meeting is reassessed and updated regularly, so new goals can be added.

# Forms and Handouts

# Inviting Team Members

Date

To:

From:

RE: SCEMA Meeting

Thank you for agreeing to attend an early morning SCEMA meeting for Jane Jones, **May 8, 7:35-8:05 a.m.** I will try to arrive early with coffee and juice to help you wake up.

Usually a SCEMA meeting takes at least one hour. However, because of our time constraints, I have streamlined the process by providing you with an outline for the procedure we will be following. You might think about the following four areas regarding Jane Jones, and bring these thoughts with you on May 8:

**Who is Jane Jones?**

Jane's positive characteristics and strengths.

**What are Jane's goals & dreams?**

As you have gotten to know Jane, what have you learned about her long term and short term goals?

**What are the challenges Jane faces meeting her goals & dreams?**

These are barriers that stand in the way of Jane successfully reaching her goals and dreams. These can be physical, academic, or emotional.

**Action plan to utilize Jane's team, family, friends, and other support to assist her to meet her goals.**

Based on the other information above that helps us learn more about Jane we can develop an action plan to assist Jane to reach her goals and dreams. This action plan assigns tasks to Jane, the rest of the school team, and her family. Coupling the tasks assist Jane in continuing to move forward with obtaining her goals.

I look forward to seeing you at the meeting May 8th.

# Meeting Agenda

**Student**_____ **Date** _____

**Introductions/Purpose**

**Who is ?**

**Goals**

**Obstacles**

**Strategies for Overcoming Obstacles**

**Action Plan**

**Closing**

# Meeting Checklist

| DATE | TASK | ✔ |
|---|---|---|
| | Coordinate a date with student and parent(s)<br>Date: _____ Time: _____ | |
| | Invite team members in writing:<br>-Student<br>-Parent(s)<br>-Special Ed/Resource Room Teacher<br>-Instructional Aides<br>-Regular Class Teachers<br>-School Counselor<br>-Principal<br>-Therapists (OT, PT, SP/LT)<br>-Other | |
| | Arrange childcare | |
| | Arrange for co-facilitator | |
| | Prepare materials<br>-Agenda<br>-Flip Chart<br>-Markers<br>-Snacks/Drinks | |
| | Reminders to team members<br>-Call<br>-Note in Box | |
| | Meeting | |
| | Summary of meeting to team members | |
| | Plan for a review meeting | |

# Action Plan Form

**Action Plan For**_____ **Date**_____

| | Who | What | When |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal 1** | | | |
| **Goal 2** | | | |
| **Goal 3** | | | |
| **Goal 4** | | | |

# Follow-up Meeting Form #___

Action Plan For_____
Date_____

| Continuing Goals, update, refocus | Who | What | When |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal 1** | | | |
| **Goal 2** | | | |
| **Goal 3** | | | |
| **Goal 4** | | | |
| **New Goals** | | | |

**Next meeting scheduled**_____

**Others to invite to meeting**_____

# Strategies for facilitating effective communication in IEP team meetings

A student-centered planning meeting will have the most positive outcome when team members feel free to contribute, and when the tone of the meeting is collaborative and focused on helping the student achieve his or her goals. If there are team members participating in the process who have a history of disagreeing over issues involving the student, this can be challenging.

The communication tips listed below can help facilitators guide the team's discussion so that all team members feel positive about the meeting, keeping old conflicts and tensions to a minimum.

**Refraining or restating**

When you note signs of tension, snide remarks, or attempts to carry over other disagreement into the meeting, try pointing this out by reframing. For example, you might say: "It sounds like there is some history of disagreement over whether this is a barrier." Then look for points of agreement. Defer big discussion for another meeting between the key parties, but encourage them to talk it through.

The student's goals can become a common ground for the team. "It's clear to me that you all have contributed to Jason's recovery. I'm hoping we can find out more about what has worked as a part of this process, so that we can keep doing more of what's worked."

**Paraphrasing**

In some cases of long-standing disagreement, the parties may have to agree that for the purposes of this meeting, they are putting history behind them and trying to start fresh. This is easier to say than to do. It is helpful if the facilitator helps the parties recognize commonalities among themselves and shows appreciation for what each does well. The facilitator is sometimes in a good position to do this because he/she sees the student across settings.

**Example: Facilitator to both parties**

You all seem to have the same goal for Jamie in terms of social relationships. There is some disagreement about barriers to those goals. But I wonder if, in spite of those disagreements, we could still come up with strategies that would help Jamie reach his goals.

**Example: Facilitator to teacher**

One of the things I really appreciate about Sam's mother is how she has supported the program you have at school to promote independence by having him do chores at home.

**Example: Facilitator to parent**

When I have observed at school I have been impressed with how hard the staff is working to structure things so Alyssa can be more independent and still be successful.

It can also be helpful to have the other party restate what he heard the speaker say. Then have the speaker validate or correct. This technique helps the parties acknowledge the emotional as well as the factual content of the messages they are sending.

Clarify statements made by the student by paraphrasing and asking the student to verify. If the student does not speak or does not speak in a way that all team members can understand, have the student's usual communication mode available and operational. Again, when the student makes a statement, the facilitator paraphrases and asks the student to confirm. Allow more time for meetings when the student's mode of communication is slow.

# New Resources from L&A Publishing

### Manuals for Parents and Educators

This new series of booklets and manuals was written to provide educators and parents with information about brain injuries and tools for effective instruction of these students. The authors are nationally recognized researchers and clinicians who have years of experience in various rehabilitation and educational settings. Most importantly, however, the content of these manuals is based on their many years of work with elementary, middle and high schools in Oregon. They have trained educators, conducted assessments of students, collaborated with families, helped develop educational plans, adapted teaching strategies and followed students over time.

The strategies and programs were developed in response to the needs expressed by educators, therapists, parents and students. They have been found to be effective methods for building upon the strengths of students with brain injuries, while helping them adjust and adapt to behavioral and cognitive challenges.

Understanding the needs of students with brain injuries is a complex challenge that is often confusing and frustrating even for the experienced educator or therapist. For those teaching a student with a brain injury for the first time, it canseem overwhelming. These manuals provide information in a user friendly style with plenty of worksheets and checklists that can be readily used by teachers, aides, specialists and parents. The vignettes help readers recognize that although each brain injury is unique, many students share common needs. Finally, all the manuals stress the importance of developing partnerships among school staff, parents and students so that this is truly a collaborative process that ultimately prepares the student for adulthood.

## How the Brain Works

**Written by Ron Savage**

This booklet provides a brief but comprehensive description of how the brain works and what happens when it is injured. Graphics illustrate the geography of the brain and the location and functions of various lobes. An overview of brain development explains how the consequences of brain injury show up over time as the child matures. Useful tool for understanding neuroanatomy and its implications for learning. *16 pages*

### Brain Injury: Causes and Consequences for Students

**Written by McKay Moore Sohlberg, Bonnie Todis, Ann Glang, and Marilyn Lash**

This booklet goes into more detail about the causes of brain injuries and defines commonly used terms found in medical reports. An overview of physical, cognitive, emotional, social and behavioral changes describe how these can affect the student's abilities and needs in the classroom and interactions with peers. The impact upon the family is also addressed. *24 pages*

### Tools for Educators of Students with Brain Injuries: Meeting challenges of middle school and high school

**Written by Bonnie Todis, McKay Moore Sohlberg, and Ann Glang**

Worksheets and strategies for developing the educational plan highlight unique considerations for students with brain injuries in middle and high school. Methods for refining observations and collecting data are used to develop educational programs and communication among team members when students have multiple teachers and classes.

### Compensatory Systems for Students with Brain Injuries

**Written by Ann Glang, McKay Moore Sohlberg, and Bonnie Todis**

Changes in memory and organizational skills after a brain injury make it difficult for this student to function in the complex environment of middle, junior high or high school with frequent changes in teachers, classes, schedules and activities. This manual helps educators select a compensatory system, teach students how to use it and monitor how will it is working. *40 pages*

### Building Friendships when Students have Special Needs

**Written by Judith Voss, Elizabeth Cooley, Ann Glang, Bonnie Todis, and Marilyn Lash**

This manual and video present an innovative program for building peer support, decreasing social isolation and developing friendships. It is an approach that parents and schools staff can use to address the loss of friends that is so common among students with brain injuries. Using a friendship facilitator, a step by step description takes the reader through how to recruit participants, involve families and peers, run effective meetings, and troubleshoot potential problems. *48 pages plus video*

For more information and a free publication catalog, contact:
L&A Publishing, 708 Young Forest Drive, Wake Forest, NC 27587 Tel: 919-562-0015

Copyright © 1999 by Lash & Associates

This manual is copyrighted by Lash & Associates and can not be reproduced in any form without permission.

This manual is part of a series on brain injury among children, adolescents and young adults.

For an order form with prices, contact Lash & Associates or visit our web site *www.lapublishing.com*

Tel:&Fax: (919) 562-0015 E-Mail: *lapublishing@earthlink.net*

For local information contact:

Published by

***LA Publishing/Training***

708 Young Forest Drive, Wake Forest, NC 27587 (919) 562-0015